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Symeon Metaphrastes: Two Puzzles Reconsidered

ABSTRACT: This article deals with a long unresolved question regarding two *Lives* of the Virgin Mary written in the second half of the tenth century by John Geometres and Symeon Metaphrastes (and his team). It is evident that one of the two authors copied the other, but scholars have been unable to conclude with certainty who depends on the other. This article reviews the problem in detail and presents new textual evidence which suggests that Symeon Metaphrastes used John Geometres as one of his sources. In considering the corresponding passages between Geometres and Metaphrastes, another question arises regarding Michael Psellos' controversial description of Symeon Metaphrastes at work. On the basis of new textual evidence, this article offers a fresh perspective on Psellos' passage and its debated meaning.

KEYWORDS: Symeon Metaphrastes; John Geometres; Michael Psellos; George of Nicomedia; Euthymios the Athonite; Virgin Mary; Menologion, Metaphrasis; Rewriting, Hagiography

A QUESTION OF INFLUENCE

In the second half of the tenth century, John Geometres and Symeon Metaphrastes¹ each wrote a *Life of the Virgin*. While both texts are presented as panegyrics on the Dormition of the Theotokos, they in fact provide a biographical overview of the Virgin's entire life. Symeon's text is much shorter and follows the Gospel narratives more closely than the *Life* by Geometres². However, the two works otherwise bear striking similarities that have led scholars to conclude that one depends on the other. In Antoine Wenger's words, "on both sides there is an identical plan, similar developments, parallel passages, rare and shared expressions. This fact can be seen by simply reading both texts."³ This observation notwithstanding, whether Symeon depends on John or vice versa has remained an open question⁴.

In 1923, Martin Jugie argued that Symeon's text was based on John Geometres' *Life*⁵. Jugie considered it odd that Symeon's text, which was meant as a Menologion reading for the feast of the Dormition (15 August), recounted the entire life of the Virgin. The reason for this, he argued, was his dependence on John Geometres' full account. According to Jugie, what appeared to him to be

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¹ As will be clarified later in this article, when I refer to Symeon Metaphrastes in this article as author of the Menologion, I mean the team of scholars and scribes working under his supervision. Cf. C. HØGEL, *Symeon Metaphrastes: Rewriting and Canonization*. Copenhagen 2002, 95–96.

² For an introduction to these texts, see now M.B. CUNNINGHAM, *The Virgin Mary in Byzantium, c. 400–1000 CE*. Hymns, Homilies and Hagiography. Cambridge 2021, 192–93, 196–99.

³ A. WENGER, *L'Assomption de la T.S. Vierge dans la tradition Byzantine du VI^e au X^e siècle*. Paris 1955, 193: "De part et d'autre, il y a un plan identique, des développements analogues, des passages parallèles, des expressions rares et communes. Le fait se voit à la simple lecture des deux textes."

⁴ For a summary of the debate, see S. MIMOUNI, *Les Vies de la Vierge*. État de la question. *Apocrypha* 5 (1994) 211–248, at 237–239, repr. IDEM, *Les traditions anciennes sur la Dormition et l'Assomption de Marie*. Études littéraires, historiques et doctrinales (*Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae* 104). Leiden – Boston 2011, 103–105.

⁵ M. JUGIE, *Sur la vie et les procédés littéraires de Syméon Métaphraste*. Son récit de la Vie de la sainte Vierge. *EO* 22 (1923) 5–10; cf. IDEM, *La mort et l'assomption de la très sainte Vierge*. Étude historico-doctrinale. Vatican 1944, 320. JUGIE was reading Geometres in cod. Vatic. gr. 504, ff. 173v–194v, and Symeon in a Latin translation by A. LIPOMANI, published in 1558, which, together with the text's excerpts in the *Catena* on the Gospel of Luke by Niketas of Herakleia (as published by A. MAI in 1837), have been reprinted in *PG* 115, 529–566.

borrowed passages and phrases, as well as the general progress of the story in Symeon, betray its inspiration by and dependence upon Geometres. But as Simon Mimouni has pointed out, this argument is hardly decisive, since one could simply reverse it and consider Geometres to be a rhetorical expansion and elaboration of the *Life* by Symeon⁶. Indeed, Albert Ehrhard had already rejected Jugie's view in 1937 and argued briefly for the dependence of Geometres on Symeon, largely because he thought that Geometres was a younger contemporary of Symeon⁷. This was not convincing either, though Ehrhard was right to maintain that, in the absence of a critical edition of Geometres' *Life of the Virgin*, the question of which text depended on the other could not be properly resolved.

The view that Geometres depends on Symeon was also supported, albeit tentatively, by Antoine Wenger, in the partial edition and French translation of Geometres' text that he published in 1955. Given Metaphrastes' profile as a rewriter, Wenger admitted that we might have expected Symeon to have used Geometres as the basis for his own Metaphrastic version of the *Life*, which adheres more closely to biographical elements. However, Wenger argued to the contrary that internal evidence points to Geometres' dependence on Symeon. For this, he cited two textual arguments⁸.

The first of these arguments was that Symeon reproduced verbatim Mary's Eucharistic prayer, as transmitted by the *Transitus Mariae* of Pseudo-John the Theologian and John of Thessaloniki. Geometres, on the other hand, subjects the same prayer to "poetic embellishment", and as a result, Symeon cannot depend on Geometres for this prayer, but must have copied it directly from John of Thessaloniki or the apocryphon. Wenger further claimed that John Geometres could not have depended on the apocryphon because some slight changes to the prayer made by Symeon are also found in Geometres. But Wenger did not consider the possibility that it was Geometres who made these changes and that they were adopted by Symeon, who in addition wanted to consult the original and give a more faithful version of the prayer in the face of Geometres' embellishments. As will be explained below, substituting a literal quotation for an allusion was standard metaphrastic practice in the process of simplifying a highly rhetorical model, especially when it came to biblical allusions⁹.

Wenger's second argument was that, when Geometres refers generally to earlier writers who recounted the legend of Mary's garments¹⁰, he is more likely to allude to Symeon than to Theodore Synkellos' sermon *On the Virgin's Robe*¹¹, which was certainly Symeon's source¹². It is not clear to me why Wenger made such a claim, but this argument does not make good sense, given that Geometres emphatically refers to "many different writers" before him. Thus, in fact, this statement appears to suggest that Geometres was aware of both Synkellos' and Symeon's accounts. If Wenger implies that it would have been unlikely for Geometres to have had access to Synkellos' sermon, this again would make little sense, since it is clear from the number of other writers whom

⁶ MIMOUNI, *Les Vies* 238.

⁷ A. EHRHARD, *Überlieferung und Bestand der hagiographischen und homiletischen Literatur der griechischen Kirche von den Anfängen bis zum Ende des 16. Jahrhunderts*. Leipzig 1937, II 309–310, n. 3.

⁸ WENGER, *L'Assomption* 193–195.

⁹ See E. PEYR, *Zur Umarbeitung rhetorischer Texte durch Symeon Metaphrastes*. *JÖB* 42 (1992) 143–155, at 153.

¹⁰ John Geometres, *Life of the Virgin* 120 (346.4–6 CONSTAS – SIMELIDIS): Ταῦτα μὲν οὖν ὥς οὐ τοῦ παρόντος οἰκεῖα καιροῦ καὶ ὥς ἰδίᾳς καὶ οὐ τῆς τυχούσης ἱστορίας ἔργον καὶ ὥς οὐκ ὀλίγοις καὶ ἄλλοις καὶ πρὸ ἡμῶν παραδεδομένα παρείσθω ("Let these remarks suffice on these matters, inasmuch as they do not pertain to the present time, and because they merit their own study rather than being a part of this one, and not least because they have already been treated in detail by many different writers before us").

¹¹ WENGER, *L'Assomption* 195.

¹² As shown by WENGER, *L'Assomption* 125–127. About one-fifth of Symeon's text is devoted to the narration of the Galbrios and Candidos legend. Symeon's account of this legend is a simplified version of Theodore Synkellos' sermon. See also P. BOOTH, *On the Life of the Virgin Attributed to Maximus the Confessor*. *Journal of Theological Studies* 66 (2015) 149–203, at 171–175.

Geometres is able to quote or allude to in his poetry and prose (including his theological scholarship, as evidenced in his *Life of the Virgin*) that he was an industrious scholar who had access to good libraries in the capital¹³. In any case, Wenger did not claim to have solved the problem¹⁴. And thus the question of dependence was subsequently described as “most controversial” (S. Mimouni)¹⁵ and uncertain¹⁶.

Since 1986, both texts have been considered as dependent upon a supposed lost Greek *Life of the Virgin*, which survived in a Georgian translation that mistakenly attributed the work to Maximus the Confessor¹⁷. Thus, the English translator of the Georgian *Life*, Stephen Shoemaker, states that, “the publication of the Maximus *Life of the Virgin* has now resolved this impasse. As van Esbroeck and I have both demonstrated, this Georgian *Life* clearly served as the primary source for the *Lives* of Symeon and John”¹⁸. But it has now been demonstrated that there is no need to postulate a lost Greek *Life* (whether by Maximus the Confessor or not), because the Georgian *Life of the Virgin* is in fact a paraphrase of John Geometres’ *Life*, composed by Euthymios the Athonite. Geometres’ *Life* is not a copy of an allegedly lost original, but an original composition consistent with the literary style and skill displayed in the rest of his writings. As I have argued elsewhere, Euthymios’ background, resources, literary and translation practices show that the Georgian *Life* can only be understood as a Euthymian version of Geometres’ text. Furthermore, in his working methods, Euthymios was almost certainly inspired by the metaphrastic practices of his age. The biographies of Geometres, Symeon, and Euthymios share numerous features, and their intellectual milieux were so convergent that they almost certainly knew one another or at the very least had met¹⁹.

¹³ See C. SIMELIDIS, *Two Lives of the Virgin*. John Geometres, Euthymios the Athonite, and Maximus the Confessor. *DOP* 74 (2020) 125–159, at 129–136, and, for example, M. CONSTAS – C. SIMELIDIS, John Geometres, *Life of the Virgin Mary*, Edited and translated (*DOML* 77). Cambridge, Massachusetts 2023, viii–ix (with n. 13), 409 (on ch. 10), 428 (on ch. 53), 447–448 (on ch. 100), 453 (on the episode of Jephonias in ch. 111).

¹⁴ WENGER, *L’Assomption 193*: “Nous avons dû renoncer à l’espoir d’arriver à une certitude dans la question controversée de la dépendance des deux auteurs.”

¹⁵ MIMOUNI, *Les Vies* 238 (“des plus controversées”). Cf. W. LACKNER, *Zu Editions-geschichte, Textgestalt und Quellen der Passio S. Polyeucti des Symeon Metaphrastes*, in: Byzantios. Festschrift für Herbert Hunger zum 70. Geburtstag, ed. W. Hörandner – J. Koder – O. Kresten – E. Trapp. Wien 1984, 221–231, at 229, with a reference to H.-G. BECK, *Kirche und theologische Literatur im byzantinischen Reich*. München 1959, 553.

¹⁶ See, for example, HÖGEL, *Symeon* 63, n. 10, and CUNNINGHAM, *The Virgin Mary* 197, n. 101.

¹⁷ See, for example, M.-J. VAN ESBROECK, *Maxime le Confesseur: Vie de la Vierge*, 2 vols. (*Corpus scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium* 479–479. *Scriptores Iberici* 21–22). Louvain 1986, 2: xix–xxviii; S.J. SHOEMAKER, *The Georgian Life of the Virgin* attributed to Maximus the Confessor. Its Authenticity(?) and Importance. *Scrinium* 2 (2006) 307–328, at 326; BOOTH, *On the Life* 183; A. BENIA, *Iōannē Geōmetrē Bios tēs Theotokou*. Meletē – Kritikē ekdosē. Athens 2021, 131*.

¹⁸ S.J. SHOEMAKER, *The Virgin Mary in the Ministry of Jesus and the Early Church according to the Earliest Life of the Virgin*. *Harvard Theological Review* 98 (2005) 441–467, at 460.

¹⁹ SIMELIDIS, *Two Lives*. In a recent article, S.J. SHOEMAKER (Mary at Mar Saba: The Late Ancient Origins of the Orthodox “Life of the Virgin” Tradition. *Journal of Orthodox Christian Studies* 5 (2022) 153–177) reiterates his view that the Georgian *Life of the Virgin* was based on a lost Greek *Life*, composed during the seventh or eighth century. Shoemaker chooses not to discuss the textual evidence presented in my *DOP* article (SIMELIDIS, *Two Lives* 145–155), which, in my view, demonstrates that the Georgian text in question depends directly on John Geometres’ Greek *Life*. Shoemaker is right to note that my *DOP* article did not sufficiently address the textual relations between John’s *Life* and Symeon Metaphrastes’ *Life of the Virgin*, but his arguments related to the origins of the Georgian text are not new and have already been addressed in my *DOP* article (SIMELIDIS, *Two Lives* 156–157). The Yerevan and Ivron fragments of the Georgian *Life* are not too old for Euthymios to have been the text’s translator, as Shoemaker argues. The Yerevan fragment (Matenadaran ms. 10257) could be as late as “the first decades of the eleventh century”, according to the expert view cited by Shoemaker himself (Mary at Mar Saba, 162). And the Ivron fragment (cod. Geor. 95ς) was not written in the late 970s, as Shoemaker (Mary at Mar Saba, 163) wants his readers to believe, but sometime during the eleventh century (J. GIPPERT – B. OUTTIER – S. KIM – et al., *Catalogue of the Georgian manuscripts*. Holy Monastery of Ivron. Mount Athos 2022, 719: “Undated (ca. 11th c.)”). Last, but not least, the colophon of cod. Tbilisi, NCM, H-1664 refers, in my view, to the production of a copy at Mar Saba (VAN ESBROECK, *Maxime le Confesseur* 1: xi), not to the original composition of the Georgian text (SHOEMAKER, *Mary at Mar Saba*, 166–167), and as a result it is not relevant to this debate.

In his Georgian version of Geometres' *Life*, Euthymios also used Symeon's *Life* as one of his sources. It is noteworthy that the preface of the Georgian *Life* names the same patristic sources as Symeon (with the addition of Gregory "the Wonderworker") and a faithful translation of the Galbrios and Candidos legend from Symeon has been interpolated into the Georgian version of Geometres' *Life*²⁰. Symeon's text was available in Euthymios' library in a manuscript copied by Theophanes, a monk and priest in the monastery of Iviron, and a scribe directly associated with Euthymios. This manuscript, cod. Ottobonianus gr. 422, fol. 48v–68v, copied as early as August 1004, is the earliest copy of Symeon's text²¹.

As far as the dates of Geometres and Symeon are concerned, recent work has placed Geometres' *Life* earlier than previous suggestions: the events alluded to in the closing paragraphs of the work are more likely to refer to the aftermath of the murder of Nikephoros II Phokas by John I Tzimiskes, that is from December 11, 969 to the autumn of 970, than to the rebellion of Bardas Phokas (987–989)²². Symeon's metaphrastic activities could have ended in 982, when he probably lost favour at court, but this is far from certain²³. Given the uncertainties with these dates, an answer to the question of dependence would be important for the relative dates of the works as well.

Following this discussion of earlier scholarship, I would like to emphasize my agreement with Wenger's view that it would make better sense if Symeon was the one who had used Geometres as one of his sources. Symeon did not intend to compose original texts²⁴. In addition, an important argument for Symeon's dependence on Geometres is, in my view, Jugie's point that a full biography (for what should have been a simple synaxarion text for the Dormition) is without parallel in the Metaphrastic corpus²⁵. Moreover, the fact that Geometres' text was used by Euthymios the Athonite as the model for his Georgian *Life of the Virgin* adds more weight to the possibility that Geometres' *Life* was the original source for Symeon as well. This is because Euthymios was closely associated with Symeon and his Metaphrastic project, and it might not be too bold to suspect that his role in this project was much greater than assumed so far or is explicitly evidenced from the sources. In Høgel's words:

"The Iviron monastery is actually the only ascertained holder of Metaphrastic texts that we know of before at least the reign of Constantine VIII (1025–1028). No other piece of evidence on the fate of the Metaphrastic texts than the activities of Euthymios and some dated Iviron manuscripts including Metaphrastic texts has come out of the reign of Basil II, during which our sources tell us that Symeon Metaphrastes fell from favour, stopped working, and died. [...] Given the lack of evidence for interest in the Metaphrastic texts from anywhere else, the Iviron monastery seems to have been a Metaphrastic hub. [...] So, if Euthymios was heavily involved in reusing Metaphrastic vocabulary, he was certainly not the only one at Iviron paying special attention to these texts.

²⁰ SIMELIDIS, *Two Lives* 149–150.

²¹ SIMELIDIS, *Two Lives* 144. This codex, together with cod. Athos, Kutlumsiu 25 (copied in October 1011) are our earliest dated manuscripts containing Metaphrastic texts. However, they contain not the normal Metaphrastic selection of texts but what EHRHARD called the "Vermischter Metaphrast"—that is, Metaphrastic texts mixed with other texts (EHRHARD, *Überlieferung* III 793–794). Symeon's text has been edited by B. LATYŠEV, *Menologii anonymi Byzantini saeculi X quae supersunt*. St. Petersburg 1912, II 347–383 from three later Moscow manuscripts dated to 1063, the eleventh and twelfth centuries respectively. For the two most problematic words discussed below, that is περιπαθέστατον (Symeon, *Life of the Virgin* 30, p. 367.9 LATYŠEV) and ἀδείας (Symeon, *Life* 30, p. 367.5 LATYŠEV), I also consulted five eleventh-century manuscripts, including cod. Ottobonianus gr. 422 (61v), copied in August 1004 (as mentioned above); cod. Paris. gr. 1215 (ff. 186v & 186r), copied by the monk Neophytos in 1080; cod. Paris. gr. 1475 (f. 110v); cod. Paris. gr. 1516 (ff. 133r & 132v); and cod. Vatic. gr. 823 (f. 171v). They all offer the text as edited by LATYŠEV.

²² CONSTAS – SIMELIDIS, *John Geometres*, x–xi, citing the view of Dmitry KOROBEINIKOV.

²³ C. HØGEL, *Euthymios the Athonite, Greek-Georgian and Georgian-Greek Translator—and Metaphrast?*, in: *Mélanges Bernard Flusin*, ed. A. Binggeli – V. Déroche (= *TM* 23). Paris 2019, 353–364, at 356.

²⁴ See HØGEL, *Symeon* 135.

²⁵ Cf. HØGEL, *Symeon* 108.

We may even start asking how much the recognition, and later sanctification, of Symeon Metaphrastes was due to Georgian involvement. Two things point that way (though certainly yielding no proof): the surprising parallel fates of the Metaphrastic texts and Euthymios' *Barlaam*; and the status of Georgian and especially Iviron affairs at the Constantinopolitan court."²⁶

In fact, I would go even further and ask: would it be possible that the Iviron monastery took over the Metaphrastic project after Symeon's demise or death? I am not suggesting that the monks added new Metaphrastic texts, but is there any evidence that they lacked the ability or authority to do so? Is it unreasonable to assume that the final editing of some Metaphrastic texts was conducted in Iviron? It is important to realize who Euthymios was and what his authorship of the Greek version of *Barlaam and Ioasaph* means for his possible involvement in a Greek Metaphrastic project. His early familiarity with the Metaphrastic corpus is extraordinary: when writing his *Barlaam*, Euthymios reused heavily about fifty Metaphrastic *Lives*, coming from all ten volumes of the *Menologion*²⁷. Furthermore, we should consider the possibility that, in addition to his strong, life-long connection to the imperial court, he might also have been connected to the Church of the Theotokos *ta Kyrou* or at least to Nikephoros Ouranos, Symeon Metaphrastes' closest friend and a prominent Kyriotes (like John Geometres)²⁸. We do not know the specific institution (church or monastery) for which the *Menologion* was originally produced²⁹. It is important to highlight the uncertainties surrounding the production and publication of the Metaphrastic texts, as well as the possible close acquaintance between the scholars involved in activities and techniques which may share common characteristics.

In addition to Wenger's view that the nature of Metaphrastes' works would tend to argue for his dependence upon Geometres, I also want to emphasize that the nature of Geometres' work—in particular its striking originality, theological depth, and rhetorical force—also supports the notion that Symeon's text is a synopsis of Geometres' (as felt by Jugie) and not that Geometres' text is an expansion of Symeon's. Wenger himself seems uncomfortable with his own argument and hoped that Geometres' dependence on Symeon “would not detract from Geometres' originality. John is not a plagiarist: he is a poet, he is a monk; he has enough inspiration, enough interior richness, to pour into the exterior framework provided by the Metaphrastes a Marian thought laden with poetry and doctrine.”³⁰

In what follows I will present linguistic, structural, and other arguments in support of Symeon's dependence on Geometres. If either Symeon or Geometres copied the other, one would expect to find some defects in the copy: if not obvious faults, at least cases where a common rare or striking phrase fits better in what was its original context. In theory, as in a manuscript, if a scribe is perfect, he may avoid any mistake in the copy. The Metaphrastic texts are of high quality, and they were supposed to have been reviewed and corrected, which means that finding glaring literary defects is not easy. However, the final versions of these texts were in need of multiple reviews (see Michael Psellos' passage discussed below) and we do not know whether all of them received the same thorough editing. The possibility that there may be texts in the Metaphrastic corpus that were not reviewed as meticulously as others, together with the undoubted fact that one of these two au-

²⁶ HØGEL, Euthymios 359–360.

²⁷ HØGEL, Euthymios 361–364.

²⁸ See SIMELIDIS, *Two Lives* 137–144 and P. MAGDALINO, *The Liturgical Poetics of an Elite Religious Confraternity*, in: *Reading in the Byzantine Empire and Beyond*, ed. T. Shawcross – I. Toth. Cambridge 2018, 116–132, at 122.

²⁹ HØGEL, Symeon 111–112.

³⁰ WENGER, *L'Assomption* 195: “Mais cette dépendance n'enlève rien à l'originalité de son œuvre. Jean n'est pas un plagiaire: il est poète, il est moine; il a assez d'inspiration, assez de richesse intérieure, pour couler dans le cadre extérieur fourni par le Métaphraste une pensée mariale, chargée de poésie et de doctrine.” It is unlikely that Geometres ever became a monk; he belonged to a lay confraternity and a choir attached to the church of the Theotokos in the *ta Kyrou* district; see MAGDALINO, *The Liturgical*.

thors (Geometres or Symeon) copied the other, should always be kept in mind when considering the evidence presented below.

A GRAMMATICAL ERROR IN A BORROWED ADVERB

The first case is a grammatical glitch in the Metaphrastic text. It is clear how the mistake happened and apparently it was not noticed during the revision of the work. For this particular passage, Geometres and Symeon draw on George of Nicomedia's oration for Good Friday, but Symeon uses Geometres as well. In the text cited below I have aligned the beginnings of the first lament of the Virgin at the cross—which is the first of four speeches by the Virgin in George of Nicomedia³¹. Geometres repeats verbatim the first words from these four speeches³². This was probably done as an acknowledgment of his source of inspiration, but probably also with the expectation that his listeners would recall the original speeches from George's famous homily³³. I have highlighted the borrowings of Symeon from John and underlined his borrowings from George:

George of Nicomedia, Or. 8 (ed. PG 100, 1469B–C)	John Geometres Life of the Virgin 80–81 (222.9–24 CONSTAS – SIMELIDIS)	Symeon Metaphrastes Life of the Virgin 30 (366.35–367.11 LATYŠEV)
Ἐπεὶ δὲ πάντα ὅσα βουλο- μένοις ἦν τοῖς θεοκτόνοις τολ- μῆσαι πεπλήρωτο, ὑπενόετο δ' αὐτοῖς καὶ ἡ ἀναίρεσις πέρας εἰ- ληφέναι, καὶ τὸ μὲν πλῆθος ἐπ' οἴκων, οἱ δὲ στρατιῶται αὐτοῦ που κατακλιθέντες εὐωχοῦντο· τότε δὴ, τότε τῶν συνωθούντων ἀνεθεῖσα, καὶ ἐπ' ἀδείας προσ- πελάσασα, ὅσον ἐπιπαύειν τοῦ σταυροῦ, τοὺς μὲν ἀχράντους κατεφίλει πόδας, καὶ τὰς καθη- λωθείσας ὠτειλὰς περιεπτύσ- σετο· τὰ τε λακίσματα τῶν αἱμάτων ἀπαρυομένη, ὀφθαλ- μοῖς προσῆγε καὶ καρδίᾳ· αὐτῇ δ' ἐνατενίζουσα, τοιάδε δακρύ- ουσα προσεφθέγγετο·	Κατέψα μὲν τὰς πληγὰς παρειᾶς ἅμα καὶ ὀφθαλμοῖς, ἐκίρνα δὲ τοῖς αἵμασι δάκρυα, μᾶλλον δὲ καὶ αὐτοὺς τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς καὶ τὰς παρειὰς συνεπεφύκει τοῖς ἥλοις καὶ ταῖς πληγαῖς. Ἐφίλονεῖκει πρὸς αὐτῇ τῷ σταυρῷ καὶ τὸ φῶς ἀφεῖναι καὶ τὴν ψυχὴν· τοῦτο μὲν ποτε καὶ τοῖς ἡδὴ κενωθεῖ- σιν ἐκ τῶν δακρύων ὄμμασι περιπαθέστερον πρὸς αὐ- τὸν ἀφεώρα, τοῦτο δὲ καὶ ῥή- μασιν ὠλοφύρετο καὶ τοῖς σχή- μασι, καὶ σὺν τῇ φιλοστόργῳ πανταχοῦ τὸ φιλόσοφον, ὥς μη- δέν τι πρᾶξαι τῶν ἀγεννῶν καὶ τοῦ υἱοῦ καὶ ἐαυτῆς ἀναξίων. Ἐποικίλλετο καὶ τοῖς πάθεσι, τὸ μὲν πάθος τῆς ὑπερβολῆς ἀπω- δύρετο, τὸν δὲ πάσχοντα τῆς ἀνοχῆς κατεπλήττετο, τοὺς δὲ θεοκτόνους ἡτιᾶτο τῆς τόλμης ἢ	Ἐπεὶ δὲ πάντα ὅσα βουλο- μένοις ἦν ἡδὴ τοῖς θεοκτόνοις <u>πεπλήρωτο</u>, καὶ οὐδὲ ὅλως αὐ- τοῖς ἐκφυγεῖν προσδόκιμος ἦν, τῶν μὲν ἔγγιστα καὶ φίλων ἀπο- φυγόντων, ἢ μᾶλλον, ἵνα τὸ τοῦ προφήτου φαίην, ἀπὸ μακρόθεν ἵσταμένων, αὐτοῦ δὲ τῷ σταυ- ρῷ τοῖς ἥλοις ἐμπεπαρμένου, τὰ τῆς φυλακῆς ἡμελεῖτο πάντως, τότε δὴ καὶ τὴν Θεοτόκον εἰκὸς ἀψαμένην <u>ἀδείας</u> αὐτῇ προσελ- θεῖν, οὕτως ἔχοντι κατὰ σχῆμα καὶ τοὺς μὲν ἀχράντους πόδας καὶ τὰς ἐντυπωθείσας αὐτοῖς πληγὰς ἡδέως καταφιλεῖν καὶ τοῖς αἵμασι δάκρυα κεραννύ- σαν ὀφθαλμοὺς προσμάττειν καὶ παρειὰς· ἐνορῶσαν δὲ καὶ περιπαθέστατον

³¹ See CUNNINGHAM, The Virgin Mary 114–116 (with bibliography).

³² In the case of the fourth speech, Geometres chose to summarize in indirect speech the first lines of George's direct speech by the Virgin; see Geometres, Life 86 (238.25–28 CONSTAS – SIMELIDIS) and George of Nicomedia, Or. 8 (ed. PG 100, 1481B). As the Georgian *Life* depends on Geometres, this is the reason why this lament "does not appear in the Georgian *Life*, but the chapter in the equivalent position commences with the fleeting and rather incongruous statement, 'And again she mourned only a little, as was fitting, and spoke words of lamentation'" (BOOTH, On the *Life* 180).

³³ This homily was read in churches and monasteries on Good Friday already in the tenth century. See MAGUIRE, Art 97–98.

George of Nicomedia, Or. 8
(ed. PG 100, 1469B–C)

John Geometres
Life of the Virgin 80–81
(222.9–24 CONSTAS – SIMELIDIS)

Symeon Metaphrastes
Life of the Virgin 30
(366.35–367.11 LATYŠEV)

τάχα μᾶλλον καὶ αὐτοὺς ἀπε-
κλαίετο.

«Τί τοῦτο, Δέσποτα; Αὐταί
σου τῆς ἀπορρήτου συγκαταβά-
σεως αἱ ἁμοιβαί; Τοῦτό σοι τῆς
μεγάλης εὐσπλαγχνίας τὸ ἀντα-
πόδομα³⁴;

81. “Τί ταῦτα,” λέγουσα,
“Δέσποτα καὶ υἱὲ καὶ Θεέ μου,
τίς ἢ τοσαύτη σου τῆς μακρο-
θυμίας ὑπερβολή³⁵;

«Τί ταῦτα» λέγειν, «ὦ δέσ-
ποτα καὶ Θεέ; αὐταί σου τῆς
ἀπορρήτου πρὸς ἀνθρώπους εὐ-
σπλαγχνίας αἱ ἁμοιβαί; τοῦτό
σοι τῆς φιλανθρωπίας τὸ ἀντα-
πόδομα³⁶;

If we work with the hypothesis that Symeon draws on both George of Nicomedia and John Geometres, he usually modifies the latter’s text, but does not hesitate to copy verbatim from George. This is perhaps because Geometres was a contemporary author, or because he was a more complex writer than George and in need of simplification. The critical phrase in the passage from Symeon cited above is the following one (right before the beginning of the Virgin’s speech): ἐνορῶσαν δὲ καὶ περιπαθέστατον (“as she looked at him in a most passionate way”). It corresponds to Geometres’ περιπαθέστερον πρὸς αὐτὸν ἀφεώρα (“she would gaze at him with a heartrending glance”). I think that Symeon (or whoever worked on this text) wanted to highlight the emotion more emphatically and in his haste changed Geometres’ περιπαθέστερον (comparative) to περιπαθέστατον (superlative). However, both terms need to be understood as adverbs and although the neuter accusative singular of the comparative of an adjective forms the comparative of the corresponding adverb, it is the neuter accusative plural of the superlative that forms the superlative of the adverb. So, Geometres’ περιπαθέστερον should have been changed to περιπαθέστατα. The mistake in περιπαθέστατον was due to its origin from περιπαθέστερον (a kind of error due to *homoioteleuton*). In my view, given the certainty that one of these texts copied the other, this is a more convincing explanation of this error than attributing it to a normal scribal error.

³⁴ My translation: When everything the God-slayers desired and dared was satisfied and they considered the killing to have been completed, the crowds entertained themselves in their houses and the soldiers lay about feasting. Then, when she was released by the pressing crowd and safely approached the point of touching the cross, she caressed his immaculate feet and embraced the wounds left by the nails. As she drew off the blood of his battered flesh, she put it to her eyes and heart. And while she was staring fixedly at him, she addressed him crying with these words: “What is this, my Master? Are these the rewards for your ineffable concession? Is this the repayment for your great compassion towards men?”

³⁵ Translation (from the same edition): She caressed his wounds with her cheeks and eyes, mingling her tears with his blood, or rather she united her eyes themselves and her cheeks with the nails and wounds. She was striving to leave even her life and soul on the very cross. At one moment, with her eyes already emptied of their tears, she would gaze at him with a heartrending glance, at another she was animated by words and gestures of mourning, though her affection was tempered in every way by philosophical restraint, so that she did nothing improper or unworthy of herself or her son. She experienced a range of emotions: she lamented the extremity of his suffering, she was astonished by the forbearance of the sufferer, and she condemned the audacity of the God murderers, or rather she probably mourned for them as well. Speaking to him, she said: “What are these things, my Master, son, and God? What is the nature of your extreme forbearance?”

³⁶ My translation: When everything wanted by the God-slaying people was satisfied and there was no expectation whatsoever that he would be able to flee from them, and while his fellows and friends abandoned him, or rather—if I were to use the words of the prophet—while they stood at a distance, and while he was fixed to the cross with nails, absolutely no thought was taken to guard his body. At this point the Theotokos naturally felt safe to come close and touch him, while he was in such condition, and to caress sweetly his immaculate feet and the wounds imprinted on them and press them closely to her eyes and cheeks, while mingling her tears with his blood. And as she looked at him in a most passionate way, she said: “What are these things, my Master and God? Are these your compensation for the ineffable compassion you showed to people? Is this the repayment for your love towards men?”

Interestingly, this is not the only problem in Symeon's passage cited above. Right before περιπαθέστατον, προσμάπτειν lacks an indirect object or, rather, in the way I have understood and translated the sentence ("to caress sweetly his immaculate feet and the wounds imprinted on them and press them closely to her eyes and cheeks"), ὀφθαλμοὺς ... καὶ παρειάς should have been in the dative³⁷. And there are also problems in the parts Symeon borrowed from George of Nicomedia. In the very first sentence of the passages cited above (ἐπεὶ δὲ ... πεπλήρωτο), Symeon omits the infinitive τολμῆσαι depending on βουλομένοις, but retains the relative ὅσα, which in George's version depends on the infinitive³⁸. And a few lines above περιπαθέστατον, the word ἀδείας is syntactically puzzling. It corresponds to ἐπ' ἀδείας ("without fear", "safely") in George of Nicomedia's source text. This expression is more common with the preposition μετά (μετ' ἀδείας), but we can hardly attribute the same syntactic function to the sole noun in the genitive case. As in the case of περιπαθέστατον, these mistakes are likely to have been due to hasty composition and incomplete editing by Symeon's team. The final editing would be essential for the Metaphrastic texts, which in their first renderings would likely contain syntactical errors and other oversights of various kinds. As Johannes K. Grossmann has observed, we should concede that syntactical, logical, and content-related errors should be expected in authors who reworked earlier texts³⁹. Indeed, in a passage discussed below, Michael Psellos implies that multiple stages of reviewing and copy editing of the Metaphrastic texts were necessary. As a result, owing to the nature of these texts, the possibility that, for example, ἀδείας above is not corrupt but imperfectly reviewed or edited, is higher than in other types of texts.

AN ORIGINAL IDEA AND ITS ANONYMOUS ATTRIBUTION (TO GEOMETRES?)

In another similar case where Symeon copies from George, there is one detail absent in George, a reference to Lazarus, which Symeon apparently copied from Geometres. Commenting on the appropriate behaviour of the Virgin during the Passion, Geometres says (regarding the Virgin): **τῷ τε γὰρ πάθει** συμμέτρως ἐκέχρητο καὶ τὰ μητέρων δεικνύσα καὶ τὰ τῶν κοσμίῳ οὐχ ὑπερβαίνουσα, **ἀλλὰ καὶ τοὺς τοῦ υἱοῦ πληροῦσα νόμους**, ὃς ἐπὶ νεκρῷ φίλῳ καὶ τὸ πάθος ἅμα καὶ τὸν λόγον ἔδειξε, τὸ μὲν δακρύσας, τὸ δὲ τηρήσας τὸ μέτριον ("she gave herself over to her emotions in suitable proportion, demonstrated the duties of a mother, and did not exceed the boundaries of appropriate behaviour, but fulfilled the teachings of her son, who, when his friend died, demonstrated both emotion and reason, shedding tears but with moderation")⁴⁰. Symeon rewrote Geometres' words (above, in bold) as follows (below, in bold), after a sentence paraphrased from George (underlined), with a preceding reference to "those who have dealt with these matters"⁴¹: Πλὴν ἀλλὰ καὶ αὐθις ὁ λόγος τὰ τῆς μητρὸς ὅπως ἔχει διεξιέτω· φασὶ γὰρ οἱ περὶ τούτων διαλαβόντες ἀπ' ἀρχῆς ἄχρι τέλους αὐτὴν διακαρτερῆσαι εὐκόσμως μὲν καὶ οὐκ ἀγεννῶς **τῷ πάθει χρωμένην, ὅμως δὲ δεικνύσαν ἐπὶ τῶν ἔργων, ὅτι μήτηρ ἐστίν, ἀλλὰ μήτηρ ἐκείνου πάντως, ὃς ἐπὶ φίλου θανόντος καὶ τὰ τῆς στοργῆς ἔδειξε καὶ ὅροις τὸ πάθος ἔστησε** ("But let my discourse go through the events related to the mother. For those who have dealt with these matters say that from beginning to end she endured the passion orderly and properly; but her actions showed as well that she

³⁷ Cf., for example, Symeon, Life of St. Eusebia/Xene 8 (PG 114, 989) ἄρτω δὲ μόνῳ τὴν χρεῖαν ἐπλήρου, καὶ τοῦτον οὐχ ἀπλῶς καὶ ἀπόνως προσιεμένη, ἀλλ' αὐτοῖς δάκρυσι βρέχουσα, τῇ σποδῷ τε τοῦ θυμιατηρίου προσμάσσουσα.

³⁸ I owe this observation to an anonymous reviewer.

³⁹ J.K. GROSSMANN, Die Abhängigkeit der Vita des Barlaam und Ioasaph vom Menologion des Symeon Metaphrastes. *JÖB* 59 (2010) 87–95, at 93.

⁴⁰ Geometres, Life 89 (248.24–28 CONSTAS – SIMELIDIS).

⁴¹ Symeon Metaphrastes, Life of the Virgin 34 (369.26–31 LATYŠEV). The sentence by George (or. 8; ed. PG 100, 1486D–1488A) paraphrased here is: διακαρτεροῦσαν, καὶ πρὸς ἅπαντα προκειμένην· τῷ τε γὰρ πάθει κοσμίως καὶ οὐκ ἀγεννῶς προσωμίλει.

was a mother, and above all the mother of him who when his friend died showed affection, but also placed boundaries on the passion”). One is tempted to think that “those who have dealt with these matters” were in fact George and John. I would also argue that the example of Lazarus was an original and creative addition to this context. This sort of idea is to be expected from John Geometres, “one of the most intelligent and original writers of the tenth century”⁴². This does not mean that Symeon was incapable of adding new thoughts to contexts that were mainly based on previously existing texts, but in this particular case, where either John or Symeon was the author of the idea, it is more likely that Symeon was the one who copied it. Symeon has added phrases or ideas from additional sources (such as the phrases from homilies of Chrysostom that have been added to the Metaphrastic martyrion of Babylas), especially in the so-called *new compositions* which were based on a freer and more complex use of sources⁴³.

HEAVY SYNTAX IN BORROWED PHRASES

In Symeon’s passage below, some phrases were apparently copied from Geometres, but they have not been incorporated into the new text with any great precision. The passages refer to Christ’s entrusting of his mother to John the Apostle:

Geometres, Life 82

(228.15–230.17 CONSTAS – SIMELIDIS)

Οὕτω τῆς μητρὸς ὀλοφυρομένης καὶ προσκειμένης, αὐτὸς ἡμερον πρῶτον καὶ συμπαθεῖς αὐτὴν ἀπιδῶν, πρὸς δὲ καὶ τὸν ἡγαπηκότα καὶ ἡγαπημένον συμπαριστάμενον μαθητὴν μικρὰ τὰ χεῖλη διακινήσας, ἡ Αὐτοσοφία, βραχέα καὶ πάντα φθέγγεται, καὶ διατιθέμενος ἅμα καὶ παρακατατιθέμενος· “γύναι, ἴδε ὁ υἱός σου.” παρθένω μητρὶ παρθένον καὶ πάλιν υἱὸν χαρίζομενος καὶ ἀντιτιθεῖς ἑαυτῷ, οὐκ αὐτὸς τὴν πρόνοιαν τῆς μητρὸς ἀπαρνούμενος—ἅπαγε—ἀλλ’ ὁμοῦ καὶ τοῖς αἰσθητοῖς τὸ σφοδρὸν τοῦ πάθους τῆς μητρὸς προσπαραμυθούμενος καὶ τὸν μαθητὴν τοῦ περὶ ἅμφω φίλτρου καὶ τῆς ἀρετῆς, **ἥδη δὲ καὶ αὐτῆς ἔνεκα τῆς ἐν τῷ Πάθει παραμονῆς ἀμειβόμενος, ὥς καὶ εἰς τὴν ἑαυτοῦ τάξιν αὐτὸν ἀντικαθιστάν καὶ τοσοῦτον αὐτῷ περιτιθέναι ἀξίωμα**· καὶ οὐ ταῦτα μόνον ποιῶν, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἡμῖν νομοθετῶν τὴν μέχρι τέλους τῶν γονέων πρόνοιαν καὶ κηδεμονίαν, καίτοι κὰν τοῖς ἄλλοις σφοδρότερον αὐτῇ προφερόμενος· “τί ἐμοὶ καὶ σοί, γύναι;” Καὶ πάλιν· “τίς ἐστὶν ἡ μήτηρ μου;” Καὶ· “μήτηρ μου καὶ ἀδελφοί μου οὗτοι εἰσίν.” Ἀλλ’ ἐνταῦθα φανερώς καὶ διαφε-

Symeon Metaphrastes, Life of the Virgin 31

(367.23–368.4 LATYŠEV)

Οὕτως ἔχουσιν ἀλγεινῶς αὐτὴν θεασάμενον τῷ φιλουμένῳ τε μαθητῇ συμπαρισταμένην ἀκόλουθον ἐκεῖνο φθέγγασθαι πάντως, ὃ καὶ τὸ θεῖον διέξεισιν εὐαγγέλιον· προσιδόντα πρῶτον αὐτὴν «Γύναι, ἴδε ὁ υἱός σου» φάναι, τὸν μαθητὴν δείξαντα. οὕτω καὶ σταυρούμενος πρόνοιαν ἐποιεῖτο τῆς μητρὸς καὶ τῷ φιλουμένῳ ταύτην μαθητῇ παρατίθει, παιδεύων ἡμᾶς ἄχρι καὶ πνοῆς ἐσχάτης μὴ ὀλιγωρεῖν τῶν γεγεννηκότων, καίτοι γε πρότερον καὶ διωθουμένῳ ἔοικεν οὐ κατὰ καιρὸν ἐνοχλοῦσαν· «Τί» γὰρ «ἐμοὶ καὶ σοί, γύναι», φησί, καὶ «τίς ἐστὶν ἡ μήτηρ μου;» ἐνταῦθα δὲ φανεράν ἐπιδείκνυται τὴν φιλοστοργίαν καὶ τῷ μαθητῇ παρατίθησιν, ἅμα μὲν αὐτὴν οὕτω παραμυθούμενος, ἐκεῖνον δὲ μᾶλλον τῇ παραθέσει τιμῶν καὶ ὅτι σφόδρα φιλεῖ τούτῳ μαρτυρίῳ χρώμενος. τί γὰρ ἄλλο ποιῶν ἢ λέγων τοιαύτης ἐκεῖνον ἡξίου τιμῆς; **ἅμα δὲ καὶ τῆς παραμονῆς αὐτὸν ἀμειβόμενος**. εἶτα καὶ τῷ μαθητῇ προσβλέψας «Ἴδε» φησὶν, «ἡ μήτηρ σου». **τοῦτο δὲ συνάπτοντος ἦν πρὸς ἀγάπην, ὁμοῦ τε τὸ ἀμφοτέρων ἐπιδεικνύοντος ἀξίωμα**. ἀπὸ τότε γοῦν καὶ ὁ μαθητὴς ταύτην λαμβάνει, φη-

⁴² LITTLEWOOD, *The Progymnasmata*, vii.

⁴³ See HØGEL, *Symeon* 100–102.

Geometres, Life 82

(228.15–230.17 CONSTAS – SIMELIDIS)

Symeon Metaphrastes, Life of the Virgin 31

(367.23–368.4 LATYŠEV)

ρόντως ἀπηρτισμένην αὐτῇ δείκνυσι τὴν φιλοστοργίαν, τὴν ἑαυτοῦ σχεδὸν πᾶσαν εἰς τὸν μαθητὴν προστασίαν μετατιθεῖς, εἴθ' ἵνα μὴ νομίσῃ διὰ προστασίαν μόνην τὴν υἰοθεσίαν ἐγχειρίζεσθαι τῆς αὐτοῦ μητρός, ἀλλὰ καὶ διὰ τὴν πρὸς αὐτὸν ἀγάπην τὴν καὶ τιμὴν, κακεῖνον προσβλέψας, “ἴδε,” φησὶν, “ἡ μήτηρ σου,” μονονουχὶ κακεῖνῳ ταύτην προστάτιν καὶ κυρίαν ἀντιδιδοῦς καὶ τὴν ὀρφανίαν αὐτῷ καὶ τὴν ἐρημίαν παραμυθούμενος, **καὶ ὁμοῦ μὲν ὑποτάττων αὐτῇ τοῦτον, ὁμοῦ δὲ καὶ πρὸς ἀγάπην συνάπτων καὶ ἕν ἄμφω ποιῶν**. Τούτῳ καὶ ὁ μαθητὴς ὑπακούσας εἰς τὰ ἴδια, τὸν τῆς Σιών οἶκον, παραλαμβάνει ταύτην, ὃν καὶ φθάσας ὁ λόγος ἐδήλωσεν⁴⁴.

σὶν, εἰς τὰ ἴδια, οἱ φέρει τὸν λόγον συνεῖς καὶ δεσποτικῶς θελήματι γνησίως ὑπηρετούμενος⁴⁵.

There is nothing plainly wrong in Symeon's text here, but there is still enough to suggest dependence on Geometres. When compared to the latter's corresponding Greek, the syntax in *τοῦτο δὲ συνάπτοντος ἦν πρὸς ἀγάπην, ὁμοῦ τε τὸ ἀμφοτέρων ἐπιδεικνύντος ἀξίωμα* (“this was [the word] of one [who was] uniting them in love and at the same time was pointing out the honour bestowed upon both of them”) is a little heavy and awkward, betraying Symeon's reuse of Geometres' origi-

⁴⁴ Translation (from the same edition): While his mother was caught up in her mourning and lamentation, he looked upon her peacefully and with compassion. To the loving and beloved disciple, who was also standing there, the very Wisdom of God moved his lips ever so softly and in a few words said everything, making a bequest and at the same time entrusting her to him: “Woman, behold your son!” And thus to his virgin mother he once again gave a virgin son, giving him to her in place of himself, not because he refused to care for his mother—by no means!—but by perceptible things he consoled his mother's excessive grief and rewarded the disciple for his affection to them both, and for his excellence of character, as well as for his standing beside her during the time of the Passion, and thus he substituted the beloved disciple for himself, and established him in his own place, and bestowed upon him such a great honor. But this was not all he did, for he also established as a principle for us to care for and support our parents until their death, even if at other times he strongly reproached his mother, saying, “Woman, what have you to do with me?” And again, “Who is my mother?” and “My mother and my brothers are these.” But now, however, quite clearly and distinctly, he shows her the completeness of his tender affection for her, transferring essentially all of her care to his beloved disciple. And then, so that the disciple would not think that this adoption was bestowed on him solely to care for the Lord's mother, but that it was also because of his own love and honor for him, the Lord looked at him and said, “Behold your mother!” all but giving her to him as his protector and sovereign, comforting him in his orphanhood and abandonment, both subjecting him to her and uniting them in love and making them both one. Being obedient to the Lord, the disciple took her into his home, that is, to his house in Zion, which my discourse will touch on presently.

⁴⁵ My translation: As he saw her in such a pain and assisted by his beloved disciple who was standing next to her, he uttered the entirely fitting words, which are mentioned in detail by the holy gospel as well. As he first looked at her, he said, pointing to the disciple: “Woman, behold your son”. In this way, even while being on the cross, he was taking care of his mother and was entrusting her to his beloved disciple, teaching us not to neglect our parents until our last breath, although earlier he seemed to have pushed her away when she annoyed him at the wrong moments; for he told her “What have I to do with you?” and “Who is my mother?”. But here he displays visibly his affection and entrusts her to his disciple, at the same time comforting her and honouring him with this trust—Christ used this as a testimony of his excessive love for him, for what other action or word would bestow such an honour on him?— and at the same time rewarding him for standing beside her [during the time of the Passion]. Then he looked upon the disciple and said: “Behold your mother!”. This was [the word] of one [who was] uniting them in love and at the same time was pointing out the honour bestowed upon both of them. From that time on, the gospel says, the disciple took her into his home, realizing the gravity of the Master's word and serving truly his will.

nal expressions. In Geometres' passage we can see the objects of συνάπτων in a smooth syntactical narrative: ὁμοῦ μὲν ὑποτάττων αὐτῇ τοῦτον, ὁμοῦ δὲ καὶ πρὸς ἀγάπην συνάπτων καὶ ἐν ἁμφοῦ ποιῶν ("both subjecting him to her and uniting them in love and making them both one"). In Symeon's text they are missing and must be supplied by the reader. But a more puzzling omission is that of the definite article τοῦ before the participles, despite the fact that the identity of the one (Christ) who unites and points out is specific and known to the audience. In addition, the word ἀξίωμα is better understood as originally belonging to Geometres' context, where it constitutes a careful climax of the honour bestowed upon John; in Symeon's text the word is used (perhaps not entirely accurately) to describe an honour bestowed upon both the Virgin Mary and John the Apostle. As far as the latter is concerned, Symeon's text reads like a commentary of Geometres. Last, but not least, Symeon's truncated ἅμα δὲ καὶ τῆς παραμονῆς αὐτὸν ἀμειβόμενος ("and at the same time rewarding him for standing beside her") is likelier to depend on Geometres' text than vice versa: ἤδη δὲ καὶ αὐτῆς ἔνεκα τῆς ἐν τῷ Πάθει παραμονῆς ἀμειβόμενος ("rewarded the disciple for his standing beside her during the time of the Passion"). What is meant by παραμονῆς in Symeon could still be inferred from his context, but Geometres' τῆς ἐν τῷ Πάθει is certainly not redundant here.

SYMEON'S SIMPLIFIED RENDERINGS

Symeon is known to have added explanations and even comments in the Metaphrastic texts⁴⁶. Such additions are indeed what we would expect to find in the Menologion texts, which, as Psellos stressed, were intended to be understandable and enjoyable for both the educated and the uneducated person⁴⁷. The addition of one particular explanation is especially noteworthy below, because it is essential for understanding Geometres' text properly:

Geometres, Life 29

(82.6–10 CONSTAS – SIMELIDIS)

Δι' ἁμφοῦ ταῦτα, καὶ ὡς παρθένος αἰδουμένη τὸν τόκον τῆς Ἐλισάβετ καὶ ὡς ἔγκυος τὸν οἰκεῖον ὄγκον ὑπεξίσταται καὶ εἰς τὸν οἶκον Ἰωσήφ ἐπανέρχεται, περικρυπτομένη καὶ λανθάνουσα μὲν καὶ ἔτι ἕως ἐξόν⁴⁸

Symeon Metaphrastes, Life of the Virgin 33

(351.16–20 LATYŠEV)

ἔθιμον δὲ ὃν ὑποχωρεῖν τὰς παρθένους, ἐπειδὴν μέλλοι τέκτειν ἢ ἐν γαστρὶ ἔχουσα (δεῖ γὰρ καὶ τοῦτο σκοπεῖν), ἤδη καὶ τῆς Ἐλισάβετ τόκου ὥραν ἐχούσης, ἡ Μαρία, καίτοι ἀτεχνῶς οὔσα ἔγκυος, ἀλλ' οὖν ἐξίσταται ὡς παρθένος καὶ εἰς τὸν οἶκον τὸν ἑαυτῆς ἐπάνεισιν⁴⁹.

In this passage, Symeon wanted to clarify Geometres' text by citing a Jewish custom mentioned by Origen, according to which, virgin women had to withdraw when pregnant women were about to give birth⁵⁰. His parenthesis (δεῖ γὰρ καὶ τοῦτο σκοπεῖν) seems to suggest that his explicit reference

⁴⁶ See PEYR, Zur Umarbeitung 150–152.

⁴⁷ Encomium for Kyr Symeon Metaphrastes, ed. E.A. FISHER, Michaelis Pselli Orationes hagiographicae. Stuttgart 1994, 281.260–282.265.

⁴⁸ Translation (from the same edition, but in this case slightly revised): "For both of these reasons, she, as a virgin, out of respect for the child of Elizabeth and, as a pregnant herself, out of respect for her own child, withdrew and returned to the house of Joseph in secret, avoiding notice as far as this was possible."

⁴⁹ My translation: There was a custom that the virgins would withdraw when a pregnant woman was about to give birth (for we need to consider this as well); Elizabeth was already at the time of her parturition and Mary, although she was really pregnant, withdrew as a virgin and returned to her house.

⁵⁰ Symeon's source for this custom seems to have been Origen (Fragments on Luke 47b), whom he copied verbatim: ἔθος δὲ ἐστὶν ὑποχωρεῖν τὰς παρθένους, ὅτε μέλλει τέκτειν ἢ ἔγκυος (ed. M. RAUER, Origenes Werke, vol. 9: Die Homilien zu Lu-

to this custom is a “response” or a supplement to Geometres, and he further feels the need to explain that Elizabeth was close to her time of labour. This is also important for understanding the relevance of this custom to Mary’s departure. Geometres himself alludes to this same custom and only those who knew about it would fully understand his words (ὡς παρθένης αἰδουμένη τὸν τόκον). He most likely had the same source in mind as Symeon (that is, Origen’s Fragments on Luke 47b), but preferred to be indirect and allusive, while Symeon returned to their original common source and cited it in full. This attitude of the two authors toward their (sometimes common) sources is discussed in more detail below.

GEOMETRES’ ALLUSIONS AND SYMEON’S RETURN TO THE ORIGINAL COMMON SOURCES

Geometres’ text was not a typical source text for the *Menologion*. It certainly needed no stylistic elevation or embellishment. On the contrary, Symeon would have found it necessary to simplify Geometres’ linguistic and rhetorical complexity, in the same way as he did for the nine encomia and high-style lives by Niketas the Paphlagonian which he also used as models in the *Menologion*⁵¹. Interestingly, the process of adapting and simplifying Geometres’ text was also followed by Euthymios the Athonite in his Georgian version of Geometres’ *Life*. Given Euthymios’ association with the Metaphrastic project, we should look for similar techniques employed by Symeon and Euthymios. First of all, it seems that Euthymios, like Symeon, would read an entire section of his model before rephrasing it⁵². In one case (his translation of Gregory of Nazianzos’ *Oration* 38) it is evident that he dictated his oral translation to two assistant scribes. He then edited their draft himself before it became ready for copying and distribution⁵³. In addition, one of Euthymios’ practices was to add explicit biblical quotations and references, in those instances where Geometres referred to the Bible only through often obscure allusions, not literal quotations⁵⁴. Indeed, this practice of importing verbatim passages of the Bible was generally followed by Symeon as well⁵⁵. To offer an example from our texts, Geometres’ καὶ πάλοι μὲν ὡς ἀετὸς νεοσσοὺς ἐπὶ τῶν περύγων ἐφύλαξας καὶ ἐπὶ τῶν μεταφρένων ἀνέλαβες (“long ago, like an eagle you protected them like nestlings under your wings, and bore them aloft on your back”)⁵⁶, was changed by Symeon to a version closer to Deuteronomy 32:11, as follows⁵⁷: ὡς ἀετὸς, σκεπάζων νοσσιάν, διεῖς τὰς πτέρυγας ἐδέξω καὶ ἐπὶ τῶν μεταφρένων τῶν σῶν ἀνέλαβες (“like an eagle that shelters its brood, you spread your wings to receive them and carried them aloft on your back”). Similarly, Geometres’ οὗς στεφάνῳ χαρίτων καὶ εὐδοκίας ὅπλῳ περιτείχισας (“encircled them with a crown of graces and a shield of favour”)⁵⁸ was changed by Symeon to ὅπλῳ εὐδοκίας αὐτὸς ἐστεφάνωσας (cf. Ps. 5:13 ὅπλῳ εὐδοκίας ἐστεφάνωσας ἡμᾶς “you crowned us as with a shield of favour”).

kas in der Übersetzung des Hieronymus und die griechischen Reste der Homilien und des Lukas-Kommentars [GCS 49]. Berlin ²1959, 246).

⁵¹ See PEYR, Zur Umarbeitung. Cf. HØGEL, Symeon 140 and C. RAPP, Byzantine Hagiographers as Antiquarians. 7th to 10th centuries, in: Bosphorus. Essays in honour of Cyril Mango, ed. C. Rapp – S. Efthymiadis – D. Tzougarakis (= BF 21). Amsterdam 1995, 21–44, at 39: “Earlier martyrs Acts required considerable rhetorical embellishment, while the stylistically elaborate pieces of a skilled professional like Nicetas the Paphlagonian had to be toned down and simplified.”

⁵² Cf. HØGEL, Symeon 97–98: “Symeon did not just take the old text sentence by sentence, but read paragraphs through to the end before rephrasing them.”

⁵³ T. OTKHMEZURI, Searching for Euthymios the Athonite’s Autograph. *Le museon* 130 (2017), 177–206, at 191–98.

⁵⁴ SIMELIDIS, Two *Lives* 148.

⁵⁵ See PEYR, Zur Umarbeitung 153.

⁵⁶ Geometres, *Life* 81 (224.17–18 CONSTAS – SIMELIDIS).

⁵⁷ Symeon Metaphrastes, *Life of the Virgin* 30 (367.13–15 LATYŠEV).

⁵⁸ Geometres, *Life* 81 (224.21–22 CONSTAS – SIMELIDIS)

As we already saw in the previous section, Symeon also recognized allusions to (apparently well-known) patristic texts and applied the same practice. Thus, Chrysostom's remarks about the star of Bethlehem, καὶ οὐχ ἁπλῶς ἐβάδιζεν, ἀλλὰ προήγεν αὐτοὺς ἔλκων καὶ χειραγωγῶν ἐν ἡμέρᾳ μέσῃ ("it was not simply marching with them, but was leading the way drawing them on and guiding them in the middle of the day")⁵⁹, were rendered by Geometres as⁶⁰: ὥσπερ οὐχ' ὁδηγὸς μᾶλλον ἢ καὶ χειραγωγὸς ἐν ἡλίῳ μέσῳ πρὸς τὸν μέγαν καὶ πρῶτον Ἥλιον αὐτοὺς ἔλκων ("it was no longer a guide but a leader drawing them in the light of the sun to the great and primal Sun"); while Symeon⁶¹ restored the wording of the original: εἰς Βηθλεὲμ ὁδηγεῖ, οὐχ ἁπλῶς βαδίζων, ἀλλ' ἔλκων αὐτοὺς καὶ χειραγωγῶν ἐν ἡμέρᾳ μέσῃ. A similar case presents us with an interesting nuance, since here Symeon restored part of Chrysostom's text (underlined below), but at the same time retained Geometres' wording (in bold):

John Chrysostom, Homily on the Gospel of Matthew 9.4 (PG 57, 180.14–21)

Symeon Metaphrastes, Life of the Virgin 21 (362.5–11 LATYŠEV)

Καὶ πῶς Ἀρχέλαος ἐβασίλευσε τῆς Ἰουδαίας, Ποντίου Πιλάτου ἡγεμονεύοντος; Πρόσφατος ἦν ἡ τελευταία γεγεννημένη, καὶ οὐδέπω εἰς πολλὰ ἦν διαιρεθεῖσα ἡ βασιλεία· ἀλλ' ὡς ἄρτι καταλύσαντος ἐκείνου, τέως ὁ υἱὸς τὴν ἀρχὴν κατεῖχεν ἀντὶ Ἡρώδου τοῦ πατρὸς αὐτοῦ· καὶ γὰρ καὶ τῷ ἀδελφῷ αὐτοῦ τοῦτο ὄνομα ἦν· διὸ προσέθηκεν ὁ Εὐαγγελιστὴς, Ἀντὶ Ἡρώδου τοῦ πατρὸς αὐτοῦ⁶².

πλὴν ἀλλ' ἔροιτ' ἂν τις τῶν φιλολόγων, πῶς Ἀρχέλαος Ἰουδαίας ἦρξε, Ποντίου τότε Πιλάτου ἡγεμονεύοντος; ἢ ὅτι ἐναγχος ἦν ἡ τελευταία γενομένη καὶ εἰς πολλὰ μῆπω διαιρεθείσης τῆς βασιλείας ὁ υἱὸς ἐκείνου τέως τὴν ἀρχὴν εἶχεν· οὐ παρέλκουσα δὲ τῷ εὐαγγελιστῇ καὶ ἡ τοῦ πατρὸς προσθήκη (ἀντὶ Ἡρώδου γὰρ φησι τοῦ πατρὸς αὐτοῦ), ἀλλ' ὥστε τοῦτον πρὸς τὸν ἀδελφὸν ἀντιδιαστεῖλαι, ἅτε δὴ καὶ αὐτὸν Ἡρώδη ὁμωνύμως καλούμενον⁶³.

Geometres, Life 59 (156.9–15 CONSTAS – SIMELIDIS)

Πολλὴν ἀπορίαν παρέσχετο καὶ τὸ πῶς ἐν ταυτῷ τῆς Ἰουδαίας καὶ Ἀρχέλαον βασιλεύειν καὶ Πιλάτον ἡγεμονεύειν ἦν· τό τε γὰρ λέγειν ὡς ἐναγχος τῆς Ἡρώδου τελευταίας γενομένης καὶ μῆπω τῆς βασιλείας δηρημένης μηδὲ τῆς Ῥωμαϊκῆς καταπεμπομένης ἀρχῆς Ἀρχέλαος τῷ τέως ἦρχεν, ἔωλον καὶ αὐτόθεν ἔχον τὸν ἔλεγχον⁶⁴.

Geometres goes on to argue at length against this view. This passage belongs to one of his forceful attacks on theological and historical views that he found unacceptable⁶⁵.

⁵⁹ John Chrysostom, Homily on the Gospel of Matthew 7.3 (ed. PG 57, 77.13–14).

⁶⁰ Geometres, Life 38 (106.21–22 CONSTAS – SIMELIDIS).

⁶¹ Symeon Metaphrastes, Life of the Virgin 17 (359.15–16 LATYŠEV).

⁶² My translation: But how did Archelaus reign over Judea, when Pontius Pilate was governor? Herod's death was recent and the kingdom had not yet been divided into many parts; but as he had only just died, the son held power for a while in place of Herod, his father; his brother also had the same name, which is the reason why the evangelist added "in place of Herod, his father".

⁶³ My translation: But a learned person could ask, how did Archelaus reign over Judea, when Pontius Pilate was governor? Indeed, this was because Herod's death was recent and as the kingdom had not yet been divided into many parts, his son held power for a while; the evangelist did not consider the addition of the father redundant (for, he says, "in place of Herod, his father"), so that he would distinguish him from his brother, who was himself called by the same name, Herod.

⁶⁴ Translation (from the same edition): Now considerable uncertainty has arisen over the question of how Archelaos was reigning and Pilate was ruling in Judea at the same time. To say that Archelaos was in power for a short period of time because Herod's death had only recently taken place, the kingdom had not yet been divided, and the Romans had not yet appointed a ruler, is an anachronistic and self-contradictory solution.

⁶⁵ The confidence of Geometres in some of his views on theological matters annoyed Michael Psellos. See SIMELIDIS, *Two Lives* 135, 153.

If Symeon consulted Chrysostom directly for short citations, then it causes no surprise that he also did so when it came to John of Damascus and George of Nicomedia, who were both used as sources by Geometres. Geometres' version of the Chrysostom passage is, as usual, highly expanded and stylistically elaborated. It is possible that Symeon wanted to return these texts closer to their original versions, not only because the shorter version was in any case what was suitable for his purpose, but also because some of these texts (and undoubtedly the biblical ones) were familiar to the audience and Symeon wanted them to be recognized. But what is significant for the purposes of this article is that in several cases it is clear that Symeon drew from both Geometres and Geometres' reputable sources for these passages, as the very first example discussed earlier in this article has demonstrated.

If Geometres is not a typical source for Symeon, Symeon's *Life of the Virgin* is also an atypical and indeed unique text in the Metaphrastic collection. As pointed out by Jugie (above), the text does not restrict itself to the Dormition (August 15) but covers the whole life of the Virgin. It is also based on a freer use of multiple sources. Even so, it is not clear how Symeon's team worked in the case of a complex Metaphrastic text such as the *Life of the Virgin*. Perhaps there were successive stages of production, one for each source. As noted above, we do not even know if some Metaphrastic texts were completed by Euthymios the Athonite and his team at Iviron, though they were certainly responsible for the final production and dissemination of the Menologion. But there is something we know about Symeon's working methods and this seems to be confirmed by some passages of our texts.

SYMEON METAPHRASTES AND HIS TEAMS AT WORK

The passages below refer to the Virgin Mary's search for a tomb in which to bury her son's body and the description of this tomb. This is the section from Geometres and its corresponding lines in Symeon:

Geometres, Life 86

(238.28–242.8 CONSTAS – SIMELIDIS)

ὅλη τῆς ταφῆς καὶ τοῦ τάφου γίνεται, μὴ φέρουσα μὲν ὁρᾶν αὐτὴ τὸν υἱὸν κρεμάμενον, μὴ φέρουσα δὲ τοὺς ἐχθροὺς καὶ ἔτι προσεπεμβαίνοντας καὶ νεκρὸν αἰκίζοντας, μὴ καὶ τι χειρὸν πρὸς ὕβριν ἐπινοήσωσιν, ὁρᾶν δὲ καὶ τοὺς παριόντας χλευάζοντας καὶ ὥσπερ κατὰ σκοποῦ πάντας βάλλοντας. Ἐπιθυμοῦσα δὲ καὶ τινα χῶρον καὶ τάφον εὑρεῖν, ἄξιον μὲν οὐδένα τοῦ θείου καὶ ζωοπαρόχου ἐκείνου σώματος, ὥσπερ καὶ τὸ αὐτῆς σῶμα τὸ θεοδόχον ἄξιον κατασκήνωμα τοῦ παντὸς πληρώματος τῆς θεότητος, ἄξιον δὲ ὁμῶς τοῦ αὐτῆς πόθου τὲ καὶ τῆς προθυμίας, ἐκπεριέρχεται γοῦν πάντα τὸν τοῦ Κρανίου Τόπον, ὥσπερ ὑπ' αὐτοῦ πτερομένη τοῦ ζωοδότου νεκροῦ. Ἀλλ' ὁ μὲν δρόμος τοὺς πόδας εἶχεν, ἡ δὲ ψυχὴ οὐ μετέβαινε, καὶ ὁ

Symeon Metaphrastes, Life of the Virgin 33

(368.20–367.32 LATYŠEV)

Εἰθ' οὕτως ὅλη τῆς ταφῆς γίνεται καὶ ὅπως ἂν τὸ θείον ἐκεῖνο σῶμα τοῦ ξύλου καθαιρεθείη καὶ μνήματος ἄρα τοῦ προσήκοντος εὐπορήσοι. ἐπεὶ δὲ οὐχ οἶα τε ἦν δι' αὐτῆς ταῦτα ἀνύειν, ὁ ταύτης υἱὸς κινεῖ πάντως τὴν ἐκείνης διάνοιαν περὶ τὸν τοῦ κρανίου διερευνῆσαι τόπον· ὁ καὶ γενόμενον εὐχέρειαν τῷ σκοπῷ διδωσιν· εὐρίσκεται γὰρ μνήμα τι καινότατον καὶ περικαλλέστατον, καὶ χῶρος, ἐν ᾧ ἔκειτο, εὐπρεπής, ἐκείνου μὲν οὐδαμῶς ἄξιος (τί γὰρ ὅλως τῶν ἐπιγείων;), τοῦ πόθου δὲ τῆς ζητούσης οὐμενοῦν οὐκ ἀνάξιος. ὁ μὲν οὖν τάφος, ὥσπερ εἴρηται, καινότατος ἦν καὶ ἀκριβῶς ἄθικτος, οὐδένα οὐπὼ δεξάμενος εἰς ταφὴν, ἵνα μὴ καὶ ἐτέρων νεκρῶν κειμένων ὁ ἀνασταὺς ἀμφιβάλλοιτο, καὶ ὁ χῶρος ἀέρος τε ἐν κα-

Geometres, Life 86

(238.28–242.8 CONSTAS – SIMELIDIS)

Symeon Metaphrastes, Life of the Virgin 33

(368.20–367.32 LATYŠEV)

μὲν τόπος ἡμείβετο, ὁ δὲ νοῦς πᾶς καὶ οἱ ὀφθαλμοὶ σχεδὸν τῷ κρεμαμένῳ συνήρτηντο, πυκνὰ καὶ πρὸς αὐτὸν ἐπιστρεφομένης καὶ ἀνακαλουμένης τὴν καὶ ἀνακλαιούσης. **Εὐρίσκει γοῦν παρ' αὐτοῦ τούτου καὶ τὴν εὔρεσιν αἰτουμένη χωρίον ἔγγιστα μὲν τοῦ σταυροῦ.** Τοῦτο γὰρ αὐτῇ μάλιστα καὶ καταθύμιον ἦν, ὥστε καὶ τὸν σταυρὸν ὁμοῦ βλέπειν καὶ τὸν τάφον ὀρύττειν, εἰ καὶ λύει τούτου τοῦ μόχθου ταύτην ὁ ἀνωδύνως ἐξ αὐτῆς τεχθεῖς, οὕτω καὶ ἀμόχθως παρ' αὐτῆς ταφείς. **Εὐρίσκεται γὰρ πάγκαλον μὲν τι καὶ παναρμόδιον** καὶ τὴν θέσιν τὴν καὶ τὴν κρᾶσιν, εὖ μὲν ἔχον ὠρῶν, **εὖ δὲ καὶ ἀέρος,** εὖ δὲ καὶ ἀσφαλείας, πάντοθεν περιειλημμένον, ἄπονον δὲ καὶ προειργασμένον. **Ἐν αὐτῷ μὲν γὰρ κήπος εἰς ὥραν** καὶ αὐτὸς πάντοθεν περιειργασμένος, ἐν δὲ τῷ κήπῳ τάφος ἡντρεπισμένος **καινὸς** ὁμοῦ καὶ κενός, ἄρτι μὲν γὰρ λελατομημένος ἐκ πέτρας, ὥσπερ καὶ τὸ Ἱερὸν διέξεισιν Εὐαγγέλιον, **οὐπω δὲ τινα δεξάμενος τῶν νεκρῶν,** ἀλλὰ τὸν καινὸν μένων νεκρὸν ὁμοῦ καὶ Θεόν. Ταῦτα δὲ πάντα καὶ ὠκονόμητο καὶ τετύπωτο· ὁ κενὸς διὰ τὴν ἀνάστασιν, **ἵνα μὴ τινος ἐτέρου νομισθῇ τῶν κειμένων·** ὁ ἐκκαινῆς διὰ τὸν νέον Ἀδάμ, τάχα δὲ καὶ διὰ τὸ ἀνεπίδεκτόν τε καὶ **ἄθικτον** πάσης ἀνθρωπίνης ἀσθενείας καὶ ἀμαρτίας· ὁ ἀσφαλὴς ἵνα μὴ καὶ κλαπῇ, μᾶλλον δὲ συκοφαντηθῇ τὴν κλοπὴν, οὕτω πάντοθεν ἀνάλωτος ὢν.⁶⁶

λῶ κείμενος καὶ εἰς κήπου ὥραν διακεκοσμημένος⁶⁷.

⁶⁶ Translation (from the same edition): She became wholly concerned with his burial and tomb, because she could not bear the sight of her son hanging there, she could not bear his enemies continuing to trample him down and torture him, even though he was dead, lest they contrive some still worse insult, and she could not bear the sight of those present mocking him as if they were still aiming to attack him. She wished to find a place and tomb that, while in no way worthy of that divine and life-giving body in the way that her own God-receiving body was a worthy dwelling place for the entire fullness of the divinity, would nonetheless be worthy of her desire and purpose; and so she searched the entire Place of the Skull, as if she had received wings from his life-giving corpse. And while her feet were moving forward, her soul did not move; and though the place was promising, her entire mind and, more often than not, her eyes remained fixed on the body hanging on the cross, for she was intensely focused on him, calling out to him and bursting into tears. Through him she found, after saying a prayer, a place near to the cross. To be sure, this was exactly what she had wished for, since from there she could both see his cross and dig his tomb, though she was relieved of this labor by the one who was born from her without pain, and so too would he now be buried by her without labor. For she found a most beautiful and suitable place, both in terms of its location and climate, mild in all seasons, having good air, secure, enclosed all around and already arranged and in need of no work. For there was a garden there in full bloom, richly cultivated, and in it was a new and empty tomb already prepared, recently hewed from the rock, just as the Holy Gospel informs us, and it had not yet received any other body, but awaited the newly dead body of God. All these things were arranged and prefigured in advance. It was empty on account of the resurrection, so that no one would think that someone else had been buried there. It was new on account of the new Adam, and perhaps also because, having received no other body, it was thus untouched by any human fault or sin. It was

There is almost nothing in Symeon which does not correspond (mostly verbatim) to Geometres' text. The latter is highly rhetorical and rich compared to Symeon's reduced version, which adheres closely to the main events, though not without linguistic elegance and flair. In a similar way, Symeon, in his more concise Metaphrastic versions, has generally shortened the narratives of the rhetorical encomia by Niketas the Paphlagonian⁶⁸. Symeon read or listened to Geometres' full passage and then composed his own abridged version, trying to incorporate the elements of the original he liked or considered essential for his own narrative. In this process, I would like to draw special attention to Symeon's very last sentence (καὶ ὁ χῶρος ἀέρος τε ἐν καλῷ κείμενος καὶ εἰς κήπου ὄραν διακεκοσμημένος) which is out of context and belongs to what was said earlier in Symeon's paragraph (εὐρίσκεται γὰρ μνημά τι καινότατον καὶ περικαλλέστατον, καὶ χῶρος, ἐν ᾧ ἔκειτο, εὐπρεπής). It seems that Symeon's team had marked these details for inclusion in the Metaphrastic version, failed to include them at the right place, and then added them at the end of the section. We also notice an explanatory addition in Symeon's text: it was because the Virgin was unable to accomplish this task alone (ἐπεὶ δὲ οὐχ οἶά τε ἦν δι' ἑαυτῆς ταῦτα ἀνύειν) that her son directed her mind towards the Place of the Skull. Geometres' corresponding sentence says only that the Virgin found this place through him (that is, her son), after saying a prayer (εὐρίσκει γοῦν παρ' αὐτοῦ τούτου καὶ τὴν εὖρεσιν αἰτουμένη).

The passages just cited above prompt me to reconsider Michael Psellos' famous and controversial description of Symeon and his teams at work (the Greek text is followed by the translation by Høgel)⁶⁹:

καὶ ἦν αὐτῷ ἡ παρασκευὴ ἐξ ἐτοίμου κύκλος τε οὐ βραχὺς τῶν τε πρώτως ἐνσημαινομένων τὴν λέξιν καὶ τῶν μετὰ ταῦτα τιθέντων· καὶ ἄλλος ἐπ' ἄλλῳ, ὁ μὲν τὰ πρῶτα ποιῶν, ὁ δὲ τὰ δεύτερα· καὶ ἐπὶ τούτοις οἱ τὰ συγγεγραμμένα ἐξακριβοῦμενοι, ἵν', ὅ τι τοὺς ὑπογραφέας λάθοι, πρὸς τὴν προκειμένην διορθώσωνται ἔννοιαν. οὐ γὰρ ἐνῆν αὐτῷ διὰ τὸ πλῆθος τῶν συγγραμμάτων πολ-
λάκις τὰ αὐτὰ ἀνακυκλεῖν τε καὶ ἐφορᾶν·

[Symeon Metaphrastes] had the facilities at hand and quite a group of people around him, some taking down the words in shorthand, others writing out the text. These people worked successively, some doing the first job, others the second. Subsequent to these were those who checked the texts so that what had escaped the notice of the copyists would be corrected according to its intended meaning. For, due to the abundance of texts, he [Symeon] could not go over and look through the same text several times.

Høgel's translation was based on the earlier translation and discussion offered by Bernard Flusin and Joseph Paramelle⁷⁰. The meaning of the phrase τῶν τε πρώτως ἐνσημαινομένων τὴν λέξιν καὶ

secure so that no one could rob it, or rather falsely claim that it had been robbed, and thus it was impregnable on every side.

⁶⁷ My translation: Then, she became wholly concerned with his burial and how this divine body would be taken down from the wood and an appropriate tomb be secured for it. Because she was unable to accomplish this task by herself, her son directed her mind to search around the Place of the Skull. And when this was done, it made her task easy. For a tomb brand new and most beautiful was found, and the place where it was situated was fair, and while in no way worthy of him (for what earthly thing would be worthy?), it was nonetheless worthy of the seeker's desire. So, the tomb was, as was said, brand new and completely untouched, having received no other body, so that the resurrected Christ would not be confused with other dead bodies buried there. And the place was situated so as to have good air and was adorned with a garden in full bloom.

⁶⁸ See PEYR, Zur Umarbeitung 147.

⁶⁹ Greek text: Encomium for Kyr Symeon Metaphrastes, p. 285, lines 333–341 FISHER. Translation: HØGEL, Symeon 93.

⁷⁰ B. FLUSIN – J. PARAMELLE, La Vie métaphrastique de Pélagie BHG 1479, in: Pélagie la pénitente. Métamorphoses d'une légende. Vol. II: La survie dans les littératures européennes, ed. P. Petitmengin. Paris 1984, 15–45, at 22–23.

τῶν μετὰ ταῦτα τιθέντων has been debated⁷¹. I share Nigel Wilson's and Paolo Odorico's doubts about whether ἐνσημαίνομαι could refer to stenography⁷²; furthermore, I think that the correct meaning of the phrase is one suggested by Odorico, who nonetheless dismissed it as impossible for the *Menologion*. Based on Odorico's discussion⁷³, as well as the case presented above (comparing Geometres' and the Metaphrastic text), I would translate the phrase as follows: "some marking up the words [of the old text], others, in a second stage, putting them down in writing [the Metaphrastic text]"⁷⁴. That is, one group of scholars and scribes would mark and annotate the original *Life*, indicating, for example, those sections or phrases which should be retained along with other necessary changes, while another group would compose the new text by incorporating parts of the old text and making further additions and changes. A third group, as Psellos says later in the passage, would review the resulting text and correct any oversights. Symeon would also take part in the process of revision, but according to Psellos (in the same passage cited above), "due to the abundance of texts, he could not go over and look through the same text several times".

Neither shorthand nor oral dictation are directly implied by the Greek. It is true that this understanding of the text removes any major direct involvement of Symeon himself. This made Odorico suggest that this passage as a whole cannot describe Symeon's work on the *Menologion*, because Psellos attributed the success of the work to the literary abilities of Symeon himself. Based on the new meaning of the passage, all the work would have been accomplished by three teams and this (in Odorico's view) is not in agreement with what Psellos implies when he praised Symeon's intellectual capacities⁷⁵. Odorico suggests that this passage could describe the teamwork process in other works of Symeon, which involved rewriting, though no other work than the *Menologion* is mentioned by Psellos in his encomium. This may be so, but in my view the passage, with the revised meaning suggested above, undoubtedly refers to the *Menologion* as well. The detail of the phrase taken from Geometres but misplaced in Symeon, at the very end of his version (in the passages cited above), seems to confirm this process.

As to Symeon's personal involvement, it would be reasonable to assume that he had trained the teams for their duties and he was supervising their work, dealing with difficulties and questions, in a way that would require his personal and direct involvement. Moreover, according to Psellos, Symeon himself reviewed the final Metaphrastic texts. In my view, all this would be sufficient involvement to credit Symeon with the success of the project. Symeon's chief collaborators would most likely have been scholars who would share with him a similar educational background, similar literary tastes, and a very good understanding of the metaphrastic practices to be followed in this particular project. We could also assume that all members of the teams would have been familiar with the original text, and they would have been trained for all three stages of production, as

⁷¹ See E.A. FISHER, Encomium for Kyr Symeon Metaphrastes, in: Michael Psellos on Literature and Art. A Byzantine Perspective on Aesthetics, ed. C. Barber – S. Papaioannou. Notre Dame, Indiana 2017, 93–217, at 215, n. 39.

⁷² N.G. WILSON, Symeon Metaphrastes at Work. *Nea Rhōmē* 11 (2014) 105–107; P. ODORICO, La sténographie de Michel Psellos. *JÖB* 69 (2019) 275–288.

⁷³ ODORICO considers various possibilities and hypotheses, which include this understanding of the passage (La sténographie 280): "Nous pouvons lire le passage de la façon suivante, qui est plus adhérente au texte: le premier groupe devait «signaler», ou «marquer» les passages à recopier, en choisissant ce qui devait être retenu et ce qui devait être mis de côté. Le deuxième groupe devait reconstruire un texte dans une forme nouvelle, utilisant les passages choisis retenus, et le soumettre aux ὑπογραφεῖς, qui étaient censés revoir et vérifier que ce nouveau texte fût fidèle au vieux."

⁷⁴ ODORICO (La sténographie 279) suggests correcting the second part of the debated phrase to τῶν τὰ μετὰ ταῦτα τιθέντων or τῶν μετὰ τὰ μετὰ ταῦτα τιθέντων, but in my view there is no need for emending μετὰ ταῦτα. WILSON (Symeon 170) proposes conjectures for τιθέντων, because its understanding as "write out the text" or "produce copies" is indeed problematic. In my reading, the verb naturally means to "put down in writing" or "order". Following my arguments in this article, Wilson (personal correspondence, May 29, 2023) "would now be inclined to emend to <μετα>τιθέντων, which would mean 'transferring them to their new context'".

⁷⁵ P. ODORICO, La sténographie 279–280.

described by Psellos above. In this way, those who would rewrite the text would have easily understood the selection and annotation made by the first team. Generally speaking, even without Psellos' testimony, one would expect that projects like the Metaphrastic *Menologion* would require the expert and extensive work of a team.

With Symeon being the leader of the project, it would be natural for him (to a medieval mind at least) to acquire exclusive authorial status and credit. In fact, it is very probable that the reason behind Psellos' rare description of an authorial team at work was that he wanted to clear Symeon of the responsibility for the imperfect quality of certain texts of the *Menologion*. Indeed, the final sentence from Psellos in the passage cited above (that Symeon could not go over and look through the same text several times) betrays some anxiety that any remaining errors would be blamed on Symeon. At the same time, when praising the literary virtues of the work highly, Psellos attributes them to Symeon himself. The latter's fame and authority (as well as the now proposed, by Psellos himself, sainthood) were important in Psellos' attempt to reassure his audience about the *Menologion*'s value. In my view, Psellos' praise of the Metaphrastic *Lives* (and thus of Symeon's) linguistic "beauty and grace", which delighted Psellos' ear⁷⁶, was (at least partly) due to a number of external factors. First, this praise should be understood in the context of Psellos' response to critics, who directly targeted the *Lives*' rhetorical devices as inadequate⁷⁷. Second, Psellos' praise of the new versions is made in comparison with the older *Lives* written in a style that seemed ridiculously rustic to Symeon's learned contemporaries⁷⁸. And although Psellos is careful to reassure his audience that he admires Symeon "for the beauty and grace <of his language> no less than for the usefulness of his subject matter"⁷⁹, the emphasis he places on the spiritual value of the *Menologion* is much stronger. Referring to the work's critics, he says that "those learned individuals want everything written for exhibition, not for beneficial moral improvement"⁸⁰. Symeon's work, on the other hand, stimulates in people a desire to imitate the saints' lives and this places his work higher than Psellos' own writings and on an equal footing with the work of a preacher of the Gospel, as they (Symeon and a preacher) both aim at the salvation of souls. It is this value of the *Menologion* which renders Symeon worthy of a heavenly reward⁸¹. Psellos also composed an *akolouthia* and his aim was to promote the status of saint for Symeon⁸². His encomium of Symeon is a hagiographic encomium, which had to praise Symeon excessively and whose words of praise should not all be taken at face value.

The Metaphrastic *Menologion* was the collaborative work of a group of scholars and scribes, under the direction, guidance, and supervision of Symeon. Recent work by Elisabeth Schiffer has concluded that "in characterising the Metaphrastic process, we need to speak about tendencies rather than rules"⁸³. In Laura Franco's words: "it is possible to observe several 'inconsistencies', which seems to confirm Psellos' suggestion that Symeon's *Menologion* is the collective work of a team"⁸⁴. Further scrutiny of the Metaphrastic *Lives* may confirm and enhance the impression conveyed by some passages discussed earlier in this article that at least in places, the quality of the

⁷⁶ Psellos, Encomium, p. 284, lines 322–323 (εὐστομίας καὶ χάριτος) and line 315 FISHER (πιάίνει γοῦν μοι τὴν ἀκοήν).

⁷⁷ Psellos, Encomium, p. 280, lines 230–242, esp. lines 236–237 FISHER: μήτε τὰ τῆς μίξεως τῶν ἰδεῶν ἐκπρεπὴ παρ' αὐτοῖς μήτε οἱ σχηματισμοὶ τῶν λόγων καταφανεῖς. Translation by FISHER, Encomium 214: "<they claim> that there is no notable mixture of forms in his works, no obvious rhetorical figures in his discourses".

⁷⁸ Psellos, Encomium, p. 278, lines 184–186 FISHER.

⁷⁹ Psellos, Encomium, p. 284, lines 322–324 FISHER. Translation by FISHER, Encomium 214.

⁸⁰ Psellos, Encomium, p. 280, lines 240–242 FISHER. Translation by FISHER, Encomium 211.

⁸¹ Psellos, Encomium, p. 284 and 286–287, lines 324–326 and 358–369 FISHER.

⁸² See HØGEL, Symeon 66 and FISHER, Encomium 201.

⁸³ E. SCHIFFER, Rewriting the *Life* of St John Chrysostom in Tenth-Century Byzantium, in: *Metaphrasis in Byzantine literature*, ed. A.P. Alwis – M. Hinterberger – E. Schiffer. Turnhout 2021, 87–107, at 106.

⁸⁴ L. FRANCO, Observations on the Methods of Metaphrastic Rewriting. The Case of the Passio of St James (*BHG* 773), in: *Metaphrasis in Byzantine literature*, ed. A.P. Alwis – M. Hinterberger – E. Schiffer. Turnhout 2021, 71–86, at 86.

metaphrasis could be too poor to be attributed to Symeon himself. As already mentioned, given the incomplete status of the Metaphrastic project and its later transmission through the Monastery of Iviron on Athos, it is impossible to know if all texts underwent the same level of revision and refinement.

To sum up, a range of literary and textual arguments suggest that Symeon Metaphrastes and his teams used John Geometres' *Life of the Virgin* as one of their sources for the composition of the Menologion's text for the Dormition. Symeon's dependence on Geometres would also be supported by and lend support to a recent earlier redating of Geometres' *Life*, according to which, the *Life* must have been completed in the aftermath of the murder of Nikephoros II Phokas (December 10–11, 969). The new textual evidence presented in this article confirms the earlier arguments based mostly on the contents of the unique Metaphrastic text on the Dormition and the nature of Symeon's work. Indeed, Symeon—who followed his sources closely and did not compose original texts—presented a synopsis of the entire life (and not only the Dormition) of the Virgin under the influence of Geometres' full and elaborate account. Symeon's Metaphrastic text, as expected in the case of high-style models, has simplified and occasionally explained Geometres' elaborate and allusive Greek. In a few cases, the Metaphrastic text shows errors and imperfections, which could have been due to an editorial review less thorough than necessary and in more than one instance betray Geometres as a model. Already Psellos in his encomium for Symeon revealed that multiple reviews of the Metaphrastic texts were necessary and that Symeon was unable to complete this task himself, but had to rely on his team. Psellos' encomium contains a controversial sentence referring to the teamwork carried out by Symeon's collaborators. A passage of Geometres reworked by Symeon's teams confirms the understanding of this debated sentence (τῶν τε πρῶτως ἐνσημαίνονμένων τὴν λέξιν καὶ τῶν μετὰ ταῦτα τιθέντων), describing the first two stages of the Metaphrastic texts' production, as follows: "some marking up the words [of the old text], others, in a second stage, putting them down in writing [the Metaphrastic text]"⁸⁵.

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